Houston Chronicle

Neighborhood News



La Porte Police may step up alcohol, tobacco stings

By: Scott Gordon Published: June 15th, 2011

La Porte police have cited six local businesses for selling alcohol or tobacco to minors in recent sting operations, and say the stings might be coming more frequently.

On May 31, police ran a sting on 38 businesses that sell tobacco, says La Porte police spokesperson Sgt. John Krueger, and ended up citing clerks for selling tobacco to minors at three: La Porte Tobacco Shop, 913 S. Broadway St.; Walgreens, 9705 Spencer Hwy.; and Mr. 10404 Spencer Hwy. Krueger says a second sting on June 9 will result in criminal charges against clerks accused of selling alcohol to minors at three: La Porte Shell, 111 N. 10th St.; Jack's Super Mart, 3124 S. Broadway St.; and Port Auto Truck Stop, 904 W. Barbours Cut Blvd.

These operations have usually taken place only once or twice a year, Krueger says, but that may change soon. "The current members of our Street Crimes unit are taking a series of proactive steps to increase similar types of sting operations," he says. "We anticipate conducting compliance actions as often as on a quarterly basis within the near future... of course, should sales to minors increase, there always exists the possibility of the operations on an even more frequent basis." Krueger says these stings "are not designed to deceive the persons that are in care, custody and control of the establishment."

The clerks in the alcohol cases could face up to \$4,000 in fines and a year in jail. In the tobacco cases, the clerks were issued citations on the spot and must appear in La Porte's municipal court, where they could face fines of up to \$500.